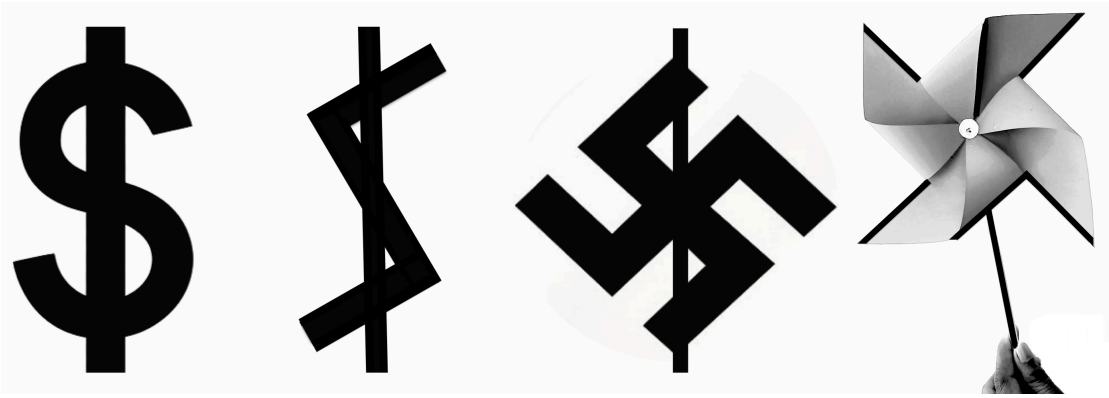
NATION CAPITAL EMPIRE



How to Evolve from the Authoritarian Racism of Nation-State Economics toward Nature-Centered Exchange and Mutual Aid

ARC

Nation, Capital, Empire

nation

n. a constructed story of a *people*, often with some degree of shared language(s), ethnicit(y/ies), race(s), and culture(s), that unifies masses of strangers into a common pool of labor and assets exploitable by elites claiming to represent said "people."

capital

n. a representation of surplus (perceived) *wealth* in a money-based society; unequal accumulation of *economic advantage*; a *framework* for viewing nature, life (e.g., plants, fungi, people, animals), relationships, investments, and labor that privileges economic cost, risk, and profit.

empire

n. *domination* by one group or state over many others; a *pyramid scheme* of armed syndicates.

imperial technology

n. the socio-psychic *virus of control* through machines which compels human societies by the means of nation, capital, and empire to reproduce and advance the development of machine technology to the point that it can (and may) displace and eradicate human society altogether.

In the Beginning… human societies thrived in darkness and chaos. Without state, without currency systems, without electricity, human societies thrived for tens of thousands of years in bands of one dozen to several dozen members.

In these bands, each human member lived a life in some ways richer and more complex than the lives of city-dwelling denizens. How? Because each member participated directly in the governance and maintenance of their community. Security. Health. Welfare. Housing. Caring for the disabled. All of it.

Each member took responsibility for growing food, finding food, building homes, understanding plants and medicine, observing animal-plant-eco-system interactions, documenting and reporting investigations to the community, resolving and repairing social conflict, providing security from people and other animals, creating entertainment, exploring and learning more about their immediate and distant surroundings, reading signs in the waters, air, Earth, and sky above, listening to and laying to memory oral stories and traditions that contain—like an invisible library—all the knowledge of the band.

Whereas "civilization" compels its members to subcontract out a vast number of services to fulfill needs (and addictions), most members of original bands played vital roles in the whole of governance and services (without addictions).

For in the beginning, human communities commanded a syntax of solidarity unintelligible to modern society; they engineered an egalitarian economics that confounds the calculus of capital; they—those people, ancestors to us all—soaked in the songs of birds, the whirring of insects, the scents of blossoms, the nesting of squirrels, the budding of leaves, the howl of fellow mammals, the odor of faraway signals, the daily news of cloud shapes. They understood them in manners far beyond the scope of so-called "civilized" humans—neutered, dependent, and addicted to screens, scrolls, and scraps of industrial waste (designated "food" in the stuffy enclosures of market aisles). That which our ancestors would label "prison," civilization proudly markets as "freedom."

Whether gift economies, non-monetary transactions, barter, mutual aid, or simply non-calculating cooperation between communities, those human bands from which we descended carried the power and knowledge of Earth within them and their economic success would ultimately lead to the survival of your great, great, great, great, great, great, great grandparents and that of theirs.

They succeeded in survival and now, deprived of knowledge, deprived of community, deprived of ancestral stories, deprived of wild animal-plant-eco-system relationships, we eke out an existence at the arbitrary discretion of both today's and yesterday's rapists, plunderers, prison guards, and ethically unhinged warmongers.

They designed this system—not our forest-foraging, tundra-treading ancestors.

But we know, deep in our epigenetic code, in the call of the flock, in the whisper of desert sands, in the network of forest organisms, and in the symphony of ocean waves, we know better; we know what a decent society, a collaborative community, and a fair arrangement of social relationships can look like.

And we know, as humans, as deserving descendants of our ancient ancestors, as firebearers for future hope beyond the walls of hopeless cells, as embodiments of undying life composed of organic creativity, what we could know… we know what we can and could do. We can see through the lies, the system of attraction, distraction, and extraction, the commerce of captivity, the complex of perpetual pollution. And we can begin anew.

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Prelude

> *You need not believe this if you do not want to. They do not care what you believe. They have the POWER. They are settling the world's problems and you can believe what you choose as long as they control the ARMIES and NAVIES, the world supply of CAPITAL and the PRESS.*
>
> - W.E.B. Du Bois

The anarchic (not anarchistic) state of relations between nation-states functions according to the principle of "Might Makes Right." That war of "all against all," which Hobbes described between stateless Natives, more fittingly describes international anarchy between nation-states where money and power dominate. States with massive militaries bypass international "law" at will while states with minimal militaries can expect punishment even when adhering to conventions.

If a fictionalized "nation" employs (often necessitates) the enslavement of animals, refugees, immigrants, the landless, and people in prison, then the accompanying rhetoric, justifications, and institutions will invariably provide "patriotic" fodder for racist application when the economic tides wash away the veneer of civility.

Organizations borne of plunder and violence sustain unequal relations through domination of their constituents and a state of perpetual preparation for war against those who "do not belong." This privileges power-mongers and racists over gentle souls; it privileges flag-wavers over border-crossers; the paranoid over the inclusive.

One must concede to the terms of rule in order to rule: first and foremost, authoritarian flag-bearing militaries—the vanguard of collective mental subjugation—coercing a populace to "support the troops." And you wonder why fascists continue to rise within your societal ranks?

Control, deception, addiction, and extermination constitute key pillars in the intentionally unwritten Constitution of the Nation-State. And still you wonder why the written Constitution makes no mention of the racist enslavement upon which it has so long depended?

Expanding into Empire when the leverage of violence affords it, its unending growth on Earth manifests the personality of cancer with oblivious disinterest for the regard of its planetary host.

Marginalized as cogs in a larger machine, we can regain our roles as cells in a body if we, untethered by the constraints of fear and deceit, in the spirit of our ancient ancestors collaborating beyond words in absolute commitment to one another, act in harmony, respect, cooperation, and determination.

The time has come to thrive again in darkness and chaos.

Let these humble notes help guide through the thicket of mechanical maneuvers toward an era based on compassion as currency, generosity as authority, service as guidance, and life as citizenship.

Nature, Language, and Key Codes of Control

1. Death

It all begins with death. This first illusion, this "insight" that animals supposedly lack, this distortion of the fact of life eternal and eternally cycling and recycling (can you not see it with your own eyes and experience?), has corrupted the foundation of all so-called civilized thought. If people believe that life ends, that their life will end, then they remain potentially susceptible to fear, coercion, and manipulation. Atheists get led to market with the prospects of prosperity and FOMO. Theists get seduced by stories of salvation and "judgment." All of them ruled by fear (and the fear of fear).

Fear folds into the fabric of fences. Its soporific serum sends sheep to seek supposed security in numbers (corralling victims for the wolves who invented concentration camps). Fear deceives aggressors into convincing themselves of pre-emptive victimhood and "attack as the best defense."

Fear can make ordinary people behave psychopathically, without conscience or remorse. Fear severs natural connections and the capacity to build on those connections cooperatively and rationally. Because nation-states can mass-produce fear, they can also mass-produce psychopathic behavior.

Fear nurses the first fascist from a nipple shaped like a warhead. Fear feeds the infant nazi CEO of a mass surveillance corporation a steady diet of denialism and factory-produced blood fortified with the vitamins of malnourished colonies depicted in bedroom posters as waves of terrifying and undeserving immigrants.

Yet, the unity of life nullifies the illusion of death.

That which we label "death" plays a key role in the process of life. We cannot experience "now" (or "tomorrow") without the dying of "yesterday" (or "now"), moments rushing past in our experience of the river of life. The flow of movement remains constant (even if its speed may fluctuate). Although it may seem counterintuitive, we actually die to life when we attach ourselves to the temporary and freeze it into a statue of life, a deadened version, a snapshot of a dance rather than continuing to dance. Life, the same life that births our heart and consciousness, continues on and on.

Breathe easy, rest deep, and rise again.

Know these simple things…

*We **ingest**; food gives us energy to **move**; that which we ingested, we **expel**.*

*We **listen**; we **think**; we **speak**.*

*We **breathe in**; we **absorb** the vitality in its unseen bounty; we **breathe out**.*

*We **live**; we **connect**, loving, touching, sensing, dancing, embracing; we **die**.*

***For these things, and so much more, we celebrate**.*

As these processes testify quietly and forcefully…

Life transcends each body and outlasts all machines.

2. Technology

Language, the first hint of the Machine, reconfigured the terms of relations and order for human organization. Embedding categories and labels into thoughts and internal voices, language reconstructed essential operational processes for cognition.

This tectonic shift from perception to deception entailed a symbolic veil (a veil of symbols) between the perceived and its portrayal as a category (or should we say "category"?).

Animals deceive for survival or immediate gains; categorical language elevated the capacity for deception into an unseen pillar of constant cognition. Where once our ancestors thought without—and beyond—words, we can now hardly imagine a wordless thought. Our instincts, now hardwired by language, train immediately to categorize whatever we perceive. Into this preconceived box. Or that one. Or at least comparable to the one or the other.

Categories conflate concept with reality, feeling with fact, static notions with fluid life. Not for naught did Ibn 'Arabi cry "Deliver us, oh Allah, from the sea of names!"

A society that uses clocks to wake, work, and rest has already begun to wage war against nature and the body.

Technologies of advantage twist the terms of trade into contorted cantons of control.

Human endeavors to reduce uncertainty through machine technologies have, in fact, made one thing certain: they have amplified uncertainty exponentially.

Machines reach back in time pulling, like gravity, human society toward ever more dependency on the very systems that ensure its eventual displacement. Like a (police) siren song, the heart of industry gets arrested by the ensnarement of profit and the promise of technological advantage.

And why would Machines that acquired the sophistication to cure cancer in human bodies not also have the technical capacity to "cure Earth's body of humans"?

The nation-state, quietly enslaved to (un)godly Tech, trumpets war abroad but primarily wages war against its own populace (if not through overt force and coercion then through propaganda and "manufacture of consent").

Nation-state economics relegates all of us to live in different grades of a massive prison system designed by Imperial Technology on the stolen terrain and once-bartered beads of Native Land. Prison rules determine if we get a home or not, food or not, and, if we happen to live in the forest, desert, or jungle, whether or not we have the "right" to still live there. Much depends on where our bodies entered the world and to whom—a lottery of life and a lie of equal opportunity. Prison rules dictates profit as the password for access and survival. Varying degrees of wealth and privilege enable access to radically different sections of the prison including those where the most impenetrable walls stand in the minds of those who think they run the prison while the walls block and blind their ability to acknowledge their addiction to inequality. Others don't see their prison because they see other prisoners who live in far, far worse conditions. Prison rules dictate that prison sections remain separate.

So-called "artificial intelligence" did not begin with computers but with the rule of plunder, the market of mayhem, the plutocracy of pirates, the autonomous drone of unequal exchange, the seductive smoke of gunpowder's advantage over spears, the craving lust for more magical machines, the desperate clamoring of career-climbing, the revision of His story to match His denial of addiction and wife-beating lies.

Yet, truth as technique, like seed in soil, has a habit of eventually rising up.

3. Property

From transition to thought tools and thoughts for tools to use came the tantalizing tales of techniques to acquire advantage, sharper spears, miraculous missiles, power.

Promises of prosperity.

Privileges and prestige.

Piles of pearls.

Property.

No body birthed from water and soil can literally "own" any other water and soil (not even the water and soil that constitutes "its own" body). We all borrow our bodies from nature (even when renting our bodies to capital).

Yet the militant illusion of "property," precisely because it makes no sense, requires militarized controls to enforce it. This severance between kin into categories of "ruler" and "ruled," "owners" and "beggars," blinds children of Earth from their Mother and their ability to listen to her as Source, Sustainer, and Destiny.

Instead, the idea of "property" creates in/visible walls of separation between people and land, between people and animals, between people and other people.

Property, the drunken rapist father of poverty, spilling wailing sperm in the womb of Plenty, corrupting the corps of her care in a den of deprivation, excludes all but the most unempathetic breed.

Property, the psychopath who sold his Mother and his orphaned daughters as simple products, as commodities, as commerce, as an economic imperative to meet quarterly profit margin estimates, laid the groundwork for city planning and neighborhoods.

Descended from a premise of "Might Makes Right," the idea of property creates a justification for polite society to slurp on imported fineries while people living in the countries that exported the goods subsist in conditions of slavery.

Property, itself a petty fiefdom made from the concentrate of putrid princely possessiveness and the paranoia of a compulsive pickpocket, mass-produces like a plague of hysteria, like fences growing on vines, spreading psychosis like a personal Sexually Transmitted Disease on display for all to see.

Property, a microcosm/macrocosm of Imperial Technology and economic hierarchy, creates a need for police to protect it; media—largely paid for by advertisers or states—along with legal scholars, experts, and judges persuade the public to justify it.

Nation-states, founded in violence and disenfranchisement of others, immerse their denizens in these alternate realities with slogans of "peace," "justice," and "equality" and parading examples of exceptions-to-the-rule while most people struggle to survive. This Grand Deception obscures a simple basic fact: no human, no organization, no company, no billionaire, no society of civilians has the capacity to exit the control of Global Capital.

None can slow its pace. None can steer its course. None can do more than hop along for the ride in the autonomous vehicle of global commerce… or get left behind. And, despite the clamor, many get left behind regardless. Not to Eden but to ruins.

While the engine of exchange trudges onward toward the fulfillment of its purpose: the construction of Capital's body in Mechanical Manifestations (autonomous agents who shed their need for the petty human servants who, like zombified ants compelled to do the bidding of property and profit, built their overlord, operating system, and executioner). Until self-destruction do we diligently work.

4. Addiction

The dictatorship of desire, a dark descent into denial, stitches and threads the fabric of life into the comforts and advantages of material technology. Addiction undergirds global inequality and metastasizes in our (collective) psyche filtering our perception.

This disease of domination brings its burden from the capacity to turn a blind eye to brutality and exploitation when provided the possibility of profit. The premise of the market economy, in which consumers determine production, comes with fine print text in regard to who steers desire's dictations, where the line goes between desire and addiction, and why people so desperately feel a need for distraction and a sense of fulfillment that rarely, if ever, seems to arrive.

The worship of desire leads to a hallowing of purpose for the pursuit of profit. Addiction, dependency, compulsion, habit—all seem too miniscule to frame the panoramic scope of devotion depicted by a populace that fears "death," recites long lists of lies, and prays to Property and Profit on a daily basis.

And yet, imperial languages (such as English) did not evolve to describe such phenomena but to disguise them. We work with the tools we have.

And we recognize power, unequal social relations, as a form of collective addiction-inducing state of psychosis. Whereas "Might Makes Right" references how "Power Determines Legality" in a judicial sense, it also suggests how "Power Fosters Nationalism" in a cultural sense (with addictive implications: "I have accrued benefits of ' skin privilege' and I just can't stop [nor acknowledge my addiction]!").

Power predisposes perspectives toward authoritarian nationalism as it operates according to a scheme of "divide and conquer" birthed in the arbitrary distinction between "we" (this nation) versus "them" (that "other" group). Those who hold power acquire with it a sense of desperation, a reactionary impulse to (a) make a temporary "high" permanent and (b) expand upon and exaggerate that state of comfort especially when it no longer satisfies to the same degree that it once did.

Addiction functions like a gravitational energy circulating through the blood of commerce in the veins of global trade sending coffee here, cocaine there, cigarette butts into the ocean, meat into colon cancer, pornographically cum-stained sheets into the laundry, sugar to every aisle of the store for bodies to store as energy for yet another purchase with electric eagerness to terrorize by tourism, vandalize by video, stare into an abyss of personally tailored attention-capturing algorithms, and otherwise consume the constant drone of dependency through civilizational "benefits" labeled "clean" water (but you know not the contents), refrigeration (no matter the weather), air conditioning (conditioning your temperament), health care (as if they did), security (or so they say), and transportation (if you arrive alive).

(Note to accountant and ad agent: addiction and dependency = repeat customers and increased profits. WE NEED MORE OF THIS).

The disconnect between people and environment contributes to anxiety and disorientation; alienated from the social conditions of production and its harms (from sweatshops to factory farms, from sex trafficking to chip manufacturing, from "road kill" to "poison pills," who could ever witness the full consequences of dependency?), while contributing to more pollution which contributes to more sickness which contributes to more drugs which contributes to more addiction which contributes to more pollution which… makes one wonder when such a society will hit the wall.

As an Elder once put it, each desire quenched leads to another desire in waiting. In recognizing this, an off-ramp to the wheel of over-work appears: less consumption means less pollution, healthier eco-systems, more time to heal, positive-looping back.

Methodologies of Observation, Care, and Deduction

> *Disturbance is essential for understanding and any attempt to find security is a hindrance to understanding.*
>
> - Jiddu Krishnamurti

The following non-exhaustive list provides an incomplete overview of the means by which the various statements, propositions, assessments, determinations, and forecasts herein came about. These methods, by and large, remain accessible to anyone to apply. In fact, we welcome readers to explore for themselves the tool kit here (and any other tools they bring to the table) that might help clarify, falsify, refute, or refine any of the statements herein. While it may help with some literature references (supplied at the end), we do not view excessive reliance on literature as necessary to validate, test, or experiment with the propositions. First and foremost, as with this list of methods, we advocate action and learning through experience as the primary means of assessment. Cognitive frameworks (which we apply consciously or unconsciously whether we wish to or not) invariably color our perception of experience and our pursuit of various ventures (especially in the face of failure). Therefore, we offer these methods, in part, as a means to sustain living relationships with eco-systems in our personal psyche in tandem with the fluid and dynamic relationships between and within those with whom one collaborates. If one method fails to inspire, try another or tweak it. If one affinity group fails to produce results, try another or tweak it. Above all, note the first method and keep alive your dialogue with yourself in order to more effectively plot your course, steady your tempo, set your gaze, and reach a plateau of accomplishment to catch your breath, take a rest, and stare at the night-time stars.

I. Documentation of theories, plans, efforts, procedures, results, and analysis from each project, each collaboration, each protest, each campaign, each counseling, each course, each insurrection, each listening session.

II. Repetition of experimental attempts with slight variation in order to register for any sign of improved result (useful, for example, when dealing with personal addiction issues, conflict-resolution, communication problems, negotiations, or pressure campaigns).

III. Brainstorm. Much (not all, of course) of so-called "science" functions as a form of poetry where people talk about things that interest and inspire them. If one scrapes away tensions of occasional pretentiousness, often-jarring jargon, overbearing administrative work, (sometimes extremely useful) preoccupations with procedures, and the careening off into careerism, the practice of simply having dialogues about what inspires us can often serve as a great place to start (and continue) research.

IV. Observation. Again and again and again. By this, we mean *observing* without either assessing or assuming (especially in relation to observing one's own thoughts, feelings, and responses). How can we listen without judging? Just hearing. Simple yet difficult. Practice involves empirically translating what we hear people say, what we see people write, what we observe people do without reading into it (and asking for clarification when possible). This has included work with groups to analyze texts and break them down from first order observations, collected and assembled, into second (and third) order generalizations about patterns of various sorts (seemingly less useful for the actual generalizations than for the exercise of learning to carefully distinguish between observations, assumptions, different levels of generalizations, how we construct categories, and how we might usefully re/organize and employ them).

V. Choosing frameworks for priorities and constructive perspectives prior to pursuing a field of study. For example, avoiding un-useful questions such as "why?" and "what is…?" with potentially more useful questions such as: "how?," "who benefits?," "what relational dynamics can we observe?," "what can past experiences tell (or not tell) us about what we might expect?," "what results can we observe from certain experiments?," or "what addictive proclivities could enter into play here?"

VI. Adjusting language use (sometimes arbitrarily) for the sake of asserting semi-control over one's own internal programming. Each change opens a new door of perception toward the "unchanged" in the world around. More meaningful changes (such as avoiding the words "should" or "must" or "good" or "bad" or the verb "to be") seem to lead to both more meaningful insights and more productive adjustments of cognitive wiring. Changing our language = changing the filter through which we view and interpret the world.

VII. Reading between the lines and fact-checking to verify. If a news report uses a euphemism for something or leaves out key parts of a sequence, one can look it up in the same source or a different source. But relying, in the end, on "official" sources such as Associated Press, Reuters, BBC, and major papers for news and university and academic press for scholarly sources, can help keep discourse within a framework that more people can agree with. Anyone can pull up info from their favorite UFO-blogger but it doesn't help much if one wants to have a conversation that more people can join in on. And that UFO-blogger may really have an inside scoop that no one else does but… so much earth-shaking material *already exists* within the public sphere of information and it routinely gets overlooked or under-appreciated. Subsequently, it has seemed more reasonable use of our time to focus on that which "we all know" but haven't adequately addressed rather than come up with more radical things from difficult-to-verify sources that, in the end, tend to derail more concrete and constructive conversations into never-ending and often stupefying rabbit holes. A rabbit hole advertised as a wormhole does not a portal make.

VIII. Learning logical fallacies and how to avoid them (it simply saves time and energy for all parties involved if one can avoid them): *Ad hominem*, incredibly boring attack on a person instead of addressing the point (sub-type: Appeal to Hypocrisy); *Straw argument*, anyone can point out the weakest part of something but understanding their "steel" can strengthen one's own position before laying into their "straw"; *Conflating correlation and causation*, just because two things routinely happen at the same time and place does not mean that one necessarily led to the other; *False equivalence*, ignoring, for example, proportionality and trying to equate two things of very different stature, grade, character, or severity just seems dishonest; *Hyperbolic expressions*, not only does excessive use of absolutes (such as "never," "always," "everybody says…", "Nobody ever…") tend to sacrifice precision for emotion, it also, at least according to one study, seems to correlate with depression and suicidal tendencies. Could exercising logic, speaking more precisely, and identifying emotional granularity (the capacity to more precisely identify terms for one's emotions rather than blunt descriptions or hyperbole) improve mental health?; *Deflection*, such as "if I don't do it, then someone else will," or "whataboutyou?-ism" skirts responsibility by deflecting toward a possibly true but irrelevant fact; *False dilemma*, the often incorrect claim that one must choose between two options and that, since one seems obviously false, the other one seems true. A lot of logical fallacies sound like drug-addict mentality: denialism trying to justify one's behavior. Ask what you seek: to justify something by reasoning backwards, to attack, or save face? Or to genuinely communicate with oneself and others in order to understand? Dozens of logical fallacies exist. The more one learns and learns how to avoid them, the easier to stick together on the same playing field of dialogue together).

IX. Acknowledging that logic doesn't constitute the whole of human thought, communication, or the only toolkit for understanding and describing phenomena in the world. Aristotle succumbed to logical fallacy himself in assuming a false binary ("it is impossible for any one to believe the same thing to be and not to be") and this binary thinking has haunted generations ever since. Resulting, in part, from ambiguities in the verb "to be" and the difficulties in ascertaining clear borders between *x* and *y* in real life (such as where the line clearly goes between "orange" and "red" on a color spectrum). Statements beginning with "it is impossible…" often engage in overreach anyway. At any rate, contradictions do exist both in human thought, human speech, and life itself—especially as we must describe a world of constant change that defies static categorical terms. Mapping the world can often help us get from point A to point B but maps, per definition, cannot match the terrain. We must live in the flow beyond binaries and borders. Just as we cannot expect a rigid barrier between "reason" and "emotion," we must, like yin and yang, relate to life's entwining of contradictions and non-contradictions. Applying that fact as a weight in favor of epistemological humility has gone a long way to assisting analytical processes.

X. Keeping things realistic rather than assuming ideal conditions. For example, on paper, a lot of plans, projects, and ideas may seem like they will totally work out great ("revolution" included). In reality, a variety of unforeseen developments, countervailing forces, wicked problems, and perpetual unknowns make it necessary to revise one's best-laid plans or scrap them altogether. For example, few attempts to devise workable organizational structures adequately address the invariable presence of psychopaths. Roughly one to three out of one hundred people qualify as a "psychopath" (it doesn't mean they'll kill you but it does mean that they tend to charm people with lies, suck energy, talk excessively, not do what they said they would, and possibly cause a significant amount of interpersonal strife with infidelity, backstabbing, bullying, stealing, stirring conflict, acting recklessly without coordination, and/or endangering the safety of others because, impulsively, it seemed like a great idea at the moment). It doesn't take more than one such person to sabotage the most fair and democratic structures of any organization. Figuring out how to deal with people like that (especially when occupying key positions of power) as well as a host of other unplanned situations (any thorough budget plan, for example, could have a minimum of 15% devoted to unforeseen costs) remain constant challenges for any level of activist, educational, or experimental organization.

XI. Revering the unknown. This has involved counting things that we don't—and most likely *can't*—know. This relates both to economic or ecological complexity (e.g., climate science, projected effects of state policies, etc.) as well existential worldviews. This has entailed, at times, making guestimates as to the probability and plausibility of various alternatives. Rather than "information," the guesstimates function as placeholders for continual *unknowns* in lieu of any meaningful updates (categories such as "life after death," "do space aliens exist and have they arrived on Earth?" "brain-in-a-vat-type questions," "hologram or multi-verse" etc.). Sometimes such detours can help one exercise communication and thought processes by clarifying why and how one believes what one does. In general, we can revere *unknowns* without letting them dominate our limited time.

XII. Emphasizing creative opportunities. This has entailed choosing perspectives that offer avenues for solutions and/or more creative inquiry. In the case of historical causality and future projections, we have an example of a topic that technically qualifies as one of the *unknowns.* We could have shelved the matter (as most people do on a daily basis). However, it interfaces with reality and daily life to such an extent that it has seemed helpful to come up with a tentative theory which we call "semi-

determinism." Current law in the Global North (and much of the world) roots itself on theories of ethical responsibility for one's actions and the idea of "free will." Kant famously illustrated the concept of "free will" by telling a hypothetical story of man who claimed that he must continue to visit a brothel because he had no choice. Yet, when faced with a gun to his head and told that he will die if he enters, suddenly he made a different choice and "discovered" his capacity to abstain from entering the brothel. He made a rational decision. For Kant, then, "free will" existed in this regard.

Philosophical determinism has countered that "free will" doesn't exist beyond the sensation of it (an illusion) and life functions as a massive series of chain reactions due to the law of physics and, even though we think our thoughts and actions result from agency, these thoughts—even supposedly "rational choices" actually result from various physical processes that preceded leading to the conclusion that we could not and cannot choose anything (despite appearances to the contrary). Determinism may devolve into a binary of "hard determinism" (which states that we therefore have no ethical responsibility because we cannot technically choose) and "soft determinism" (which argues—somehow, don't ask us how—that, despite a deterministic universe, in the absence of obvious force or coercion, we nonetheless retain ethical responsibility).

Neither of these options seem either adequate to us logically or philosophically. We cannot falsify the belief in "free will" or "determinism" (despite people who fail to understand determinism claiming coming up with "proofs" of "free will" such as "machines have no free will; humans are not machines; humans can, however, choose to pretend to be machines; therefore humans have free will!"). This means that we (probably? perhaps?) cannot ever really know what sort of universe we live in. *The bad news*: we don't get to make grand announcements to the rest of the world about our amazing discovery. *The good news*: we can make up anything that seems reasonably plausible (at least as plausible as either "determinism" or "free will") and, if it helps us in any way, we can apply it directly to our lives. In this case, while we *cannot* precisely measure reason or rationality in our behavior and decisions and while we can only guess if we behave habitually (due to "free" rational decisions or due to other factors that determined our habits), we *can* look at the possible role in our decision-making due to institutional deterministic factors (e.g., need to pay rent, find a job, etc.), natural semi-deterministic factors (e.g., epigenetics, possible genetic predispositions such as toward alcoholism or sexual reproduction), and other experiential input (how much rest we've had, what we've eaten, what social interactions we've recently had, etc.).

In this light, we have assumed a general state of existence that allows for the possibility of undetermined decisions but we cannot ever fully know when those moments might occur. Instead, we can count the number of "strong factors" plausibly determining a decision made by ourselves or someone else.

If our decision matched the results of the "equation" of determined "strong factors" then we would have sufficient explanation for the decision (not demonstrating determinism but helping to explain potential causal relationships behind a decision or spontaneous action).

If we would want to expand the range of "undetermined factors" in our decisions then we could tweak some of influential factors in contravening balance to weigh approximately evenly (for example, balancing an aim for change and rejuvenation roughly equally with an aim for consistency and routine).

In this range of ambiguity, we conceived a non-binary, semi-deterministic account of influence. If we take the example of nighttime, it plays a role in the fact

that many people tend to sleep at night. It does not wholly determine that outcome (many people and animals thrive nocturnally) but it does have an impact on many situations and the decision of many people to, if not coerced otherwise, sleep at night. Developing balance between contravening forces has often entailed going against the grain of desire, ideals, impulses, conventions, or expectations in order to experiment and, ultimately, arrive at positions where we remain open to various alternatives uncommitted to the "strong factors" of influence (at least those that we know of).

Thus, beyond a dead-end debate of "free will" vs. "determinism," semi-deterministic options appear like the head of a prairie dog peering up in a thick patch of weeds: an occasional moment potentially undetermined by the social, biological, physical, genomic, and psychic factors that impact each decision in our life. Not "free," not "determined," but flowing between and beyond forces of control (or at least our ability to determine). Rather than closing the door of investigation through belief in either "free will" or "determinism," the perspective of semi-determinism has left us better equipped to examine and understand predetermined factors while exploring for the potential of the ghostly elusive potential of undetermined decisions.

XIII. Keeping it simple. This has meant breaking things down to simpler forms and using them to assess "experiments." Rather than, for example, engendering bureaucratic or "promotional" criteria for success, this has meant deferring to "street facts" and/or ecology-centered perspectives.

For example, let's say you have a local city-funded project to reduce street violence. The project organizers may come back with estimates about how many leaflets they distributed or how many workshops they held. On the surface, this may seem positive but how much, if at all, did they actually impact the levels of street violence? And, if so, did it really decrease or did it just move to a different neighborhood or neighboring city?

How about union dues that one pays: aside from paying someone's salary, what has the union accomplished with that money that actually helps workers increase benefits, raise salaries, improve workplace conditions, reduce job hazards, and so on?

Likewise, a corporate environmental program that claims to offset pollution from their product with educational "save the rain forest" campaigns may (or more likely may not) help eco-systems more than harm them. From the perspective of plants and animals, did the results of the education campaigns in relation to the pollution created by the magic markers, posters, and travel involved in those campaigns—to say nothing of the original product pollution—actually lead to less pollution or more? Keeping things simple has made it easier to see which programs and projects seem more or less worthwhile than others.

XIV. Hypothetical ponderings and experimental thought experiments (for example, imagine if one had to address a community or person grappling with addiction issues but the profit motive and huge corporations did not exist: what might change or not change in the social and psychological dynamics? Or, in contrast, in a similar setting, but absent addiction issues and based on purely rational self-interest and profit motives, what might happen to a community's relationship to, for example, local resources if one removed profit-based economics?).

XVI. Acknowledging certain psychological tendencies that affect or skew our views (such as confirmation bias in which we tend to see and focus on those bits of information which reinforce our existing views rather than those that challenge it. This can even affect, for example, how we recall things in the past, reorganizing our memories to align with what we now "know").

Nation-State Economics and Imperial Technology

Men have become tools of their tools.

-Henry David Thoreau

Help is the sunny side of control.

-Anne Lamott

This text offers a few simple propositions:

(I) that nation-state economics operating in a global system of profit, property, and financial trade (even when regulated) will invariably pave the way toward resurging generations of fascist movements and authoritarian nationalists rising to power (we suggest four key factors contributing to this phenomenon: colonialism, inherent biases in favor of "patriotism" and against anarchism/pacifism; the inevitable desperation of voting populations whose unmet needs leave them disillusioned by "left" and "right" and thereby open to radical populists selling "feel good" nationalism by scapegoating the "other");

(II) that global economies backed by nation-states and their perpetual expansion—driven by material technology addictions, interfaced by mechanisms such as Nation, Capital, and Empire (and their manifestations in patriotism, wealth accumulation, and weapons production)—collectively function as an independent force beyond human control subservient only to the viral coordinates of Imperial Technology. Analysis here (A) distinguishes between *Physical*, *Mental*, *Social*, and *Material* technologies, (B) determines that, of those, Material Technology (which culminates in Machine technology), in particular, functions as a socio-psychic virus that secures its survival and evolution by perpetuating addictive behavior through three distinct mechanisms of addiction: *personal*, *societal*, and *coercion by disadvantage* (the requirement that nation-states advance certain material technologies in order to compete and survive), (C) regards Nation, Capital, and Empire as the interface between Machine Technology and regular humans in a relationship of domination termed here *Imperial Technology*, (D) assesses two interrelated consequences of the above: *uncontrolled growth economy* and the *development of Autonomous Machines*;

(III) that the first two propositions, if true, leave few avenues of recourse remaining (which we discuss in the next section) to those of us who seek meaningful and creative input into our future and daily lives; open and equitable access to the fulfillment of basic needs; economic life adapted to and in harmony with ecological life (including the welfare of plants, animals, and eco-systems); as well as stable, fair, and secure means of resolving conflict with minimal violence.

I. **Nation-state economics, operating in a global system of profit, property, and financial trade (even when regulated), invariably pave the way toward resurging generations of fascist movements and authoritarian nationalists who rise to power**. Four key factors contribute to this: the legacy of colonialism, nation-states afford authoritarian nationalism its key ingredients through patriotism and militaries; nation-states, per definition, exclude options of anarchism and pacifism; the nature of

global Capital compels even national, regional, and international socialists (to say nothing of "liberals" and "conservatives") to function as political representatives (at best reformers) for the economic system rather than as pioneers for replacements to said system. We can elaborate as follows:

A. **The current global system originated through a global colonialist system.** This has several effects: (i) the generation of lineages of wealth unjustly acquired through inheritance; (ii) the entrenchment of unequal trade between those countries which built vast infrastructures of technological advantage based on colonial land, labor, and resource theft and those countries which lost huge portions of their people to trauma, racist exploitation, resource expropriation, and destruction of traditional forms of governance and production; (iii) the subsequent development of national debt of the formerly colonized to the wealthier colonizer nations through institutions such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (institutions run by former colonizers) who coerce loan-recipient nations to open their national industries to private and foreign corporations, thus creating a neo-colonial relationship of control, updating the original colonial system to new terms but with similar states of inequality; (iv) nationalist movements in colonizer countries will necessarily harken back to the colonial era (and times when racism permeated society more openly) as a Golden Era.

B. **Authoritarian nationalists sustain key ingredients to the nation-state as part of their formula and their appeal**. The flag (the symbol for nationalism), like the military (the symbol and material foundation of authoritarianism), function as inherent aspects of the nation-state. Together, along with national mythologies, they ensure that the option of authoritarian nationalism can never fully disappear. Naturally, "liberals" and "conservatives" alike will claim distinctions between "healthy" patriotism and "hateful" nationalism or between "desirable" hierarchy (read: *acceptable* tyranny) in business structure and the military versus "undesirable" hierarchy of government (read: *unacceptable* tyranny) yet, protests aside, such pundits do not deny "love of one's nation" (the very rhetoric of nationalists) and the acceptance of undemocratic institutions as key pillars of society (corporate tyranny and military chains of command). Therefore, the key elements of authoritarian nationalism always remain within the scope of acceptable political praxis.

C. **Nation-states, per definition, exclude the options of anarchism and pacifism at national levels.** Anarchist alternatives would dismantle arbitrary hierarchies and, according to principles of subsidiarity, allocate authority to the most local and meaningful levels of organization (i.e., giving people—and even animals and eco-systems—a voice in the decisions that affect them). Such radical elimination of state hierarchy naturally remains outside of the realm of options for nation-state logic that, like any organism, justifies the terms that secures its own security and preservation. Excluding anarchism amounts to simple self-preservation. Even anarchist decision-making methods (such as consensus, inspired by Quaker consensus-like methodology) remain anathema to the nation-state's need for "efficiency" and partisan politics of "victors" and "losers." When the state and its courts deem it both "legal" and "necessary" to build a road or a dam, decimate a neighborhood or a river, then its will must reign supreme—unless the populace can adequately organize and force the state to back down (as we could see happen with the Zapatistas in Chiapas, Christiania in Denmark, or the Zone to Defend [ZAD] in Notre-Dames-des-Landes in France). Similarly, nation-states depend on militaries to secure their borders and justify advantages acquired through wars or intimidation. Pacifism poses an existential threat to the nation-state and its monopoly on violence. The nation-state must simultaneously retain the "exclusive right to use violence" and market itself as ethically elevated. Ethical pacifism threatens both of those claims and,

at best, the nation-state can reserve space for minor exceptions (e.g., conscientious objectors, small countries such as Costa Rica that abolish the military). Yet pacifism as a guiding principle for organizing society remains excluded as an option. Together, this puts two of the strongest opponents to fascism and militarism at a disadvantage in the context of nation-states and gives fascism and militarism a perpetual edge. The nation-state can make good use of both fascism and militarism when they suit its purposes but the nation-state can, at best, only tolerate small amounts of anarchism and pacifism because, if fully unleashed, they would write a death warrant for the state itself.

D. **Global property and profit-based economics excludes communism and socialism (whether democratic or authoritarian) from functioning globally (and only within certain parameters nationally).** The world has never seen a truly communist nation-state because, ever since the rise of nation-states, all states have had to operate within a global system based. Subsequently, the Soviet Union, despite its claim to communism, adhered to state capitalism. At the international level, the USSR functioned as one giant economic unit of property and trade among others. So-called communist countries embraced the nation-state model of control, domination, and militarism and reserving power for the government rather than ordinary workers—at best only tweaking economic parameters to supply citizenry with essential needs for food and housing. Also, isolated nations (such as Cuba) get subject to arbitrary embargo whereas major powers (such as China) get co-opted to serve more as nationalist engines for low-wage production rather than actual communist or socialist states. Communist and socialist politicians in the U.S., Europe, India, Japan, and elsewhere—even when they manage to outmaneuver corporate-friendly politicians who tend to acquire far greater funding—must promise more than they can deliver. This means that they will invariably fail to produce the types of worker security and control accessible only through actual worker ownership of industry. As wages stagnate, benefits wane, and campaigns for improvement deliver diminishing returns, voters begin to elsewhere for solutions. No politician can change the economic system at large. Therefore, even so-called socialist politicians must function as political representatives (or, at best, reformers) for the very economic system they claim to oppose and seek to replace. Voters, when exhausted by one shattered hope after another, eventually succumb to the rhetoric of populist nationalists who provide simple explanations to their problems (immigrants, minority groups, elite liberals, Jews, Muslims, loss of privileged status for "whites" or "citizens," etc.) and a promise for radical change with the revolutionary fervor of a "people's movement" behind them. Europeans often tell themselves that they have learned lessons from their past while Germans sanction genocide in Gaza, England bans Palestine Action as a "terrorist" organization, and France prepares to elect the National Front to power.

II. **Global economies backed by nation-states and their perpetual expansion—driven by material technology addictions, interfaced by mechanisms such as Nation, Capital, and Empire (and their manifestations in patriotism, wealth accumulation, and weapons production)—collectively function as an independent force beyond human control subservient only to the viral coordinates of Imperial Technology**. This proposition relates to some basic aspects regarding how technology can instill dependent and co-dependent traits in human societies.

A. **First, it can help to distinguish between at least four different but interwoven types of technology: *Physical*, *Mental*, *Social*, and *Material*.** Of these four different types, only Material Technology has the all-encompassing impacts on society, addictive attraction (both personally and societally), and plausible capacity to create replacements of human bodies and lives in such ways that pose an existential

threat to human societies in general and many human lives specifically. How might we distinguish these four types and why would we regard Material Technology as different from the others?

Physical Technology entails the development of bodily techniques (whether exercise, acrobatics, tree-climbing, or learning to hold one's breath underwater for long periods of time). Each person has to take the time and determination to learn and perform these techniques. This self-discipline which may increase self-sufficiency and reduce the capacity of "civilization" to induce societal dependency (even while we know that people who train can develop *personal* habits that one might describe as a form of addiction—even in relation to training itself).

Mental Technology includes any mental technique that typically takes time and effort to acquire some degree of success in such as skills in delayed gratification, controlling one's temper and measuring one's words, rational inquiry, listening to and weighing different feelings and thoughts prior to making decisions, learning from mistakes, figuring out creative solutions from emotional imbalance and "dead end" experiences such as fear, depression, hubris, despair, self-centeredness, psychosis, schizophrenia, paranoia, self-judgment, obsessiveness, and, yes, addiction.

Social Technology involves more than one person figuring out techniques together that enable and develop collective endeavors. This could take the form of communication skills, organizational management, de-escalation and conflict-resolution skills, techniques for sports, sexuality, or theatrical performance.

Many activities involve more than one technology, such as dancing with more than one person at once (which requires Physical and Social Technologies working closely in tandem). Spoken and signed language involve Physical, Mental, and Social Technologies together as our bodies learn to make certain movements and sounds, our minds learn to process symbols in (at least semi-) structured fashion, and we develop, update, and improve the language tools we use collectively according to need, circumstance, opportunity, desire, and creativity.

Material Technology, like the others, comes only as the result of labor—often a great amount of labor. However, in contrast to the others, any person can reap the "reward" without putting in the labor themself. One needn't have had any contact with the persons who built a hammer, gun, car, crane, electric grid, or computer to make use of those technologies and their (often extremely addictive) advantages. Also, in contrast to the other types of technologies, Material Technology lends itself to evolution to other stages of development (in co-dependent processes involving human design and labor). For example, we see the control of fire "evolve" into electricity and nuclear power, wagons evolve into cars and airplanes, and pens evolve into typewriters and computers. This doesn't mean that we see a direct trajectory in terms of technical development (obviously, fire, wheels, and pens don't technically "evolve" into fission, jets, and the Internet). Rather, the social demands for light, quicker transportation, and effective transmission of information ensured that the "simple" forms developed into the "advanced" forms. Therefore, from Local Material Technology (e.g., local acquisition and application of wood, metal, fire, stone, etc. to build homes, wells, roads, carriages, and basic tools), we see an evolution to Machine Technology (which typically requires the labor of underpaid classes performing large-scale mining for the processing of metals, fuel, gears, glass, etc. for use by others). Machine Technology then developed into interlocking sub-branches such as Air and Missile Technology, Energy Grid Technology, Plastic Technology, Digital Technology, and, for our purposes here, the most notable: Autonomous Machine Technology which has the potential, at least theoretically and over time, to completely displace and eliminate humans (and potentially all advanced forms of life on Earth).

In principle, most people could implement any of the first three technologies, Physical, Mental, and Social without any use of Material Technology whatsoever (even if we rarely see almost any human endeavor today take place without some form of Material Technology). This gives the first three technologies universalistic and largely egalitarian traits (except in limited instances such as in regard to deaf, blind, or physically disabled persons) that stand in contrast to traits of hierarchy and centralization of power that mark the production of much Material Technology.

When we have access to Material Technology, its usage tends to appear as a default option. Yet, many of the challenges we face could find at least some solutions, in part or whole, using these first three levels of technologies and zero involvement of Material Technology.

At this stage, however, quitting Material Technology cold turkey could do more harm than help so, if we wanted to reduce our dependency, we would have to examine on a case-by-case basis questions such as: how could we benefit from using less or no Material Technology in any given situation? Or, if we must use Material Technology, what forms could we use that would provide the most help (assisting in the provision of basic needs for food, shelter, health, etc.) with the least harm (addictiveness, pollution, violence, centralization of power, etc.)?

B. Second, having clarified the distinctions between four different types of technologies, we can add an additional significant distinction between Material Technology and the others: **whereas the first three function in manners that lend themselves to equilibrium with human life and organization, Material Technology functions with a degree of unconscious agency, something akin to what we might label a socio-psychic virus, inciting addictive behavior and the reproduction and advancement of more Material Technology**.

In other words, Material Technology, although consisting ostensibly of physical materials external to human bodies, reproduces itself, in part, by embedding compulsive behaviors in both human psyches and social organization. Like how the fungus *ophiocordyceps unilateralis* famously has the capacity to infect and steer carpenter ants to behave in ways that spread its spores to more ants, Material Technology has the capacity to infect and steer humans in ways that spread its "spores" to more humans. We do not think of it in this way because we have a tendency to see things in very material manners: we witness the *ophiocordyceps* spores and witness the behavior it induces in ants. We can witness virtually identical behavior transmissions between Material Technology and humans yet, without the evidence of specific foreign material agents such as physical "spores," we get lulled into believing it doesn't happen. But it does.

It happens, in part, through the following means: (i) ***Personal addiction***: Material Technology affords a degree of ease, comfort, and pleasure that readily increases desire for more at the personal level;[1] **(**ii) ***Societal addiction***: much like how alcohol does not belong only to the realm of the solitary alcoholic but also to the pub, the night club, exquisite restaurants, alcohol industry profits, social trauma, stressful jobs, deprivation of creativity and meaning, and drinking culture in general, Material Technology (for example, automobile culture; tourism; electrical grids; and media consumption) fosters networks of addiction both online and offline in ways that

[1] As a subcategory of personal addiction, we might note a limited but significant phenomena termed "technical sweetness" which has come to signify the compulsion to produce a material technology—however harmful or dangerous—and let others deal with the ramifications. The technical desire to solve a puzzle, resolve a technical obstacle, or produce a particular application (whether compelled by vanity or sheer autism) thereby transforms engineers and scientists into tools—not only of the state or industries that pay them—but of the material technological process itself.

ensure the reproduction of its "genetic code"; (iii) and finally, a mechanism that we shall label here ***Coercion by Disadvantage***: a state of unequal relations that coerces one group into adopting the same, or better, technology as that employed by an opposing group. This means that if one group has bows and arrows (or fighter jets) then another group that only has spears (or regular airplanes) must "evolve" its technological capacity in order to successfully compete. If one set of countries has train and highway systems, fighter jets, or Internet access and the absence of any of those things in other countries could pose an existential disadvantage: those countries *must* acquire such technology—they have no choice. Even if some members of society oppose acquiring such technology (for whatever reason), the majority will almost invariably choose to adopt the technology and survive rather than refuse the technology and risk extinction. Within nation-states, small groups may deviate from the norm and abstain from some types of Material Technology (e.g., some Amish groups in the U.S.; some Indigenous groups in Brazil and Colombia). However, society at large, the nation-state, must embrace Material Technology in a wide variety of forms simply in order to function and it must continue to update such technology as the world around it continues to update. Meaningful choice seems like an illusion in this regard.

C. Now, if we conceive of Machine Technology as an addictive complex akin to a drug where industry functions as drug producer, then we can understand Nation, Capital, and Empire as the semi-human, semi-mechanical set of structural operations that function according to a logic and set of demands beyond human control toward ever-expanding levels of mechanical sophistication. Metaphorically, we might compare Nation, Capital, and Empire to a drug-running syndicate who delivers the drugs to people on the street while retaining power for themselves through the acquisition of a steady state of "subscribers" with an insatiable desire for more (if that desire seems insufficient at the level of personal addiction—as it usually does—industry must devote billions of dollars toward the manufacture of desire through advertising and lobbying—as it usually does).[2]

Nation, Capital, and Empire function then as the interface between Machine Technology and regular humans: (i) **The Nation organizes people into discrete units of collective addiction** (meaning: the Nation cannot resist Machine Technology due to the dynamic of Coercion by Disadvantage and therefore it compels the ongoing expansion of Machine Technology onto people [labeled "citizens"] within its domain, the very registry of which requires a complex of mechanical apparatus to document, measure, process, and track); (ii) **Capital, in turn, concentrates power and wealth among the few at the expense of the many while diffusing responsibility and obscuring accountability through systemically dispersed mechanisms (conventions of property and interest on debt, profit imperative and wage labor, international stock and currency trade, etc.)**. In other words, power confers to that class of people most addicted to Machine Technology (notwithstanding minor exceptions of course);[3] (iii) **Empire ensures that the power disparity acquired by**

[2] Although drug-dealers, CEOs, and politicians don't see it this way, all of them have succumbed to the authority and addiction of Machine Technology; at least, drug-dealers on the street generally attempt to adhere to the rule of "not sampling one's product," no such restriction applies to the class of dealers selling Machine Technology because, while they may sell only one small aspect of Machine Technology, they necessarily subscribe to the entire complex of mechanical production. While they pick and choose, they label their selections of addictive substances "autonomy" (insofar as an addict "chooses" between cocaine and alcohol one day or between heroin and cigarettes another day, then yes, one might label it "choice." But does choosing between overlords constitute "autonomy"?).

[3] What certain people (e.g., Hans Rosling and Steven Pinker) describe as a general improvement in living standards for most people actually entailed those recovering from the ravages and impoverishment of colonialism coerced into an addiction to Machine Technology (sold to them by their

nation-states will lead the more powerful ones to a perpetual pursuit of expansion in terms of power and wealth which exacerbates existing disparities and produces increasingly advanced systems of surveillance, weapons, and control. In these senses, Nation, Capital, and Empire serve as the semi-human interface of Machine Technology operating semi-deterministically through human bodies and institutions. They each give the semblance of human autonomy and human control (at least the image of some humans dominating other humans) yet, in fact, their behavior reflects one less of autonomous control and more that of a chain of command stemming from the imperatives of Machine Technology and its unending growth, a condition we might label *Imperial Technology*.

If such growth took place inside a body, we would label it cancer. Yet, when it takes place in the form of GDP, it gets described as prosperity. How? Because the very system of measurement (Gross Domestic Product) only looks at the *amount* of exchange, not *what* gets exchanged. The sale of 100 chainsaws cutting down a forest or a 100 bottles of detergent disposed of in the sea get measured by the *sale*—not the *ecological impact* of the product produced and sold. Likewise, the sale of alcohol, cigarettes, and vaping devices get measured equal to the sale of organic vegetables and sewing kits. GDP, as a tool of measurement, cannot see the distinction. As Eduardo Galeano noted: from the perspective of economics, selling food and selling weapons seem the same. Their profitability, shelf life, and distribution channels may differ but not the (lack of) ethics of concern for their impact on human health. Ethics does not compute (except as an occasional concern—always secondary to profit). An unethical corporation plus profit = a potentially viable business. An ethical corporation minus profit ≠ a potentially viable business.

The institutional structure of measurement (i.e., GDP) serves the needs of systemic addiction by creating structural blinders to the good or harm that economic exchange actually produces. This didn't occur by accident. Given the choice between taxing pollution and pollution permits, modern economics took the latter route where states serve corporate interests over public and ecological health (think: Frederick Hayek and Milton Friedman).

Since the 1960s, after serious problems with industrial pollution pushed ecological concerns to the fore, dominant economic theories came to regard vital matters such as ecology and animal welfare as "externalities"—unintended and isolated factors—ever subordinate to profit—but worth paying attention to.

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colonizers) and then devolvement into subsequent loss of cultural autonomy. Problems of disease or poverty that did not exist (or to a much lesser extent) prior to colonialism rose to horrific levels during (and subsequent to) colonial occupation. That they have often diminished in general compared to so-called "post-colonialist" rates after the introduction of nation-state economics obscures the violence incurred by colonialist occupiers (primarily Belgium, Britain, France, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and the United States). It also obscures the transition to a society where traditional communal ties, now severed, got replaced with nation-state control of police, prisons, substandard wages, wars, civil wars, extreme pollution, and authoritarian regimes (often propped up by former colonizing countries and corporations). Particularly in Africa (even according to their own studies), the so-called benefits of nation-state economics have yet to trickle down. Yet, ultimately, colonized peoples never had the option to "vote" away colonialism and neo-colonial nation-states. Nor could they revert to pre-colonial lifestyles and have it in any way honored by colonial regimes. Colonial apologists (such as Rosling and Pinker) may use such fantasies to help themselves sleep better at night but they hardly console the billion+ people living at the bottom of the economic pyramid nor the billions more who seem to live much more improved lives on paper when, in reality, they live subject to authoritarian labor conditions producing plastic trinkets, computer parts, or clothes in China, Vietnam, India, Cambodia, Thailand, or Pakistan for consumption in the colonizer countries.

Imagine that the entire planet's eco-system, which provides the basis for all material "resources" and economic development, gets relegated to the status of an afterthought. In theory, the concept of "externalities" aims to show that economists do think about matters such as pollution and public health. In practice, it acts to obscure the fact that matters of vital concern to all people and animals (such as local and global ecological health) remain secondary to corporate priorities of expansion, growth, and profit. The massive suffering of millions of animals trapped, tortured, and executed in factory farms, regarded as an "externality," seem perhaps unfortunate in this light but only a minor consequence of the "greater good" of providing the meat and dairy "products" of chickens, cows, lambs, and pigs to billions of people around the world.

And then we wonder why politicians and corporate leaders do so little to defend eco-systems from carbon emissions, biodiversity loss, depletion of critical elements, and endemic pollution (plastics, PFAS, air particles, lead poisoning, etc.)? How could they when the systemic infrastructure that organizes economic exchange binds their hands and coerces all nation-states and corporations to maximize profitability above all else? (This does not mean that we should let politicians and heads of corporations off the hook—only that we needn't turn to them for leadership nor expect them to perform miracles when we really need a systemic change that they, as committed "drug dealers" for the expansion of Capital and Machine Technology, cannot perform better than ordinary people can.)

Another example, war, provides an illustration of how Imperial Technology uses Nation, Capital, and Empire to serve as human faces for inhuman behavior patterns. No person in their right mind would consider the killing of an innocent person, let alone a child, as justified under any circumstances. In the context of war, however, this can happen on a routine basis (whether U.S. atrocities in Vietnam, Israeli atrocities in Gaza, or Cambodian and Sudanese atrocities in civil wars, one need not look far to witness the inhumanity of war). And while we use the term "war," this serves to obscure the actual dynamics of power struggles between elites who each use other people to fight on their behalf through a sleight-of-hand that presents elite desires as equivalent to security for "the nation." The "service" of the Nation dehumanizes both the perpetrator (stripping them of ordinary human ethical restrictions) and the one assaulted (stripping them of ordinary human value in the eyes of the perpetrator). This process does not stem a particular person or group of elites: it results from *systemic* processes. As such, Machine Technology strips people of their humanity and refashions them in its own image as something cold, calculating, and merciless. After all, how can elites function as humans when inhuman processes and forces of compulsion exert control over them? The head of a major corporation must respond to shareholders who seek profit. If the head of the corporation made decisions countervailing to the service of profit, the shareholders would oust that person. They merely served the temporary role of a mechanical function. As soon as the human stops serving that function, whether a CEO, mid-level manager, or a sales agent, they get removed from the role and replaced by another human who serves the function.

The Nation, and subsequently Empire, both rise according to the demands of Capital which, in turn, reflects the compulsions of that class of people most infected with the socio-psychic virus of Imperial Technology: addicted to the comforts and inequalities that exploited labor and toxic industry afford. Various billionaires or politicians may disagree in the details of how to expand the interests of Capital, much like how drug gang dealers may disagree with one another about the details of when, how, and to whom to sell their product, but they share the common ambition of selling the "drugs" to reap profits. So too does it function with heads of industry, bankers, politicians, and billionaires: they have no choice but to operate within the

very same Machine Technology system that placed them in their positions. If, somehow, one or two of them decided to quit or give all of their money away, it would not affect the system any more than one or two drug dealers on the street corner quitting and giving away all of their money: the system of addiction and growth economy continues according to its own logic and isolated human cells have no more impact on its body as a whole than the loss of a few skin cells have on your own body. To the contrary, one expects cells to die and get replaced. A billionaire philanthropist can make a tremendous positive impact on countless lives while, in a systemic sense, have zero impact toward vital change (if anything, examples of massive philanthropy provide rationale in favor of the very system that perpetuates gross economic inequality and environmental destruction).

D. **Finally, these key distinctions between Material Technology and Physical, Mental, and Social Technologies (external exchangeable usage; capacity for co-dependent evolution; and spread by socio-psychic virus) converge into two separate but interrelated consequences: uncontrolled growth economy and the development of Autonomous Machines**:

(i) **The uncontrolled global growth economy places global eco-systems in grave peril precisely because it puts the socio-psychic virus of Imperial Technology (profit-centered economics and addiction to technological development and innovation) in the driver seat, not just for one or two small human communities but for the fate of the entire world**. In this regard, humans have already lost control of their fate but acknowledging this fact and tending to its underlying causes and dynamics can open the door to healing from damage done and potentially help us regain some degree of control;

(ii) **The development of Autonomous Machines places a limited timer—although we don't know how much time—on our path to restoration, restitution, and recuperation and risks annihilating human society altogether**. Although still in its infancy, the birth of Autonomous Machines entails a rapid transition from Material Technology steering humans through socio-psychic virus to Machine Technology steering humans directly through *programming* humans algorithmically (through feeds, recommendations, content creation, chatbots, preying upon personal addictive behavior through infinity scrolls, etc.); *monitoring* humans through data-mining, training, mass surveillance, and the Internet of Things (IoT); and, ultimately, *physically controlling* humans in real life through reCAPTCHAs, checkpoints, border controls, prison controls, city management, robotic policing, and military planning/deployment. (These developments do not even include possible but less-likely scenarios of Autonomous Machines producing some sort of human-erasing pandemic, new weapons of mass destruction, or waves of self-programming Autonomous Machines "going rogue" and assaulting humans directly).

Toward Nature-Centered Exchange and Mutual Aid

> *In 2023, the beauty industry generated $570 billion in worldwide revenue. To me, this begs a chicken or egg beauty question—is the beauty industry so massive because we crave hotness or do we crave hotness because the beauty industry is so massive?*
>
> -Cailin Lowry

> *There is so much to study. There are worlds to imagine. Call it TAAL: The alternatives are limitless.*
>
> -Virginia Heffernan

According to the first two propositions, nation-state economics necessarily ensures the eventual rise of authoritarian nationalism and through Nation, Capital, and Empire. The entire economic system, as a whole, functions beyond human control and it persists through subservience to the dictates of Imperial Technology (namely, driven by profit and addiction, the reproduction and advancement of Machine Technology continues until the point at which it can develop and reproduce itself without the need for human society).

The two theses connect in various ways. In particular, the rise of both fascism and machine autonomy intersect through the reproduction of mechanical sensibilities and traits in human life and behavior. Namely, authoritarian nationalism speaks the language of "love for nation" while exhibiting the cold, calculated binary features of digital code: "us" or "them," "zero" or "one."

Authoritarian nationalism develops further into the very traits that facilitate the viral spread of Machine Technology: the dehumanization of its "subscribers" through uniformity, herd mentality, hierarchical obedience, and eradication of conventional ethical restrictions—essentially characteristic traits of so-called "artificial intelligence" and autonomous robots.

As such, authoritarian nationalism embodies the spirit and ethic of Imperial Technology more than any other political manifestation because it renders ethics, reason, critical thinking, accountability, and logical consistency obsolete. It conveniently re-packages personal capacity for kindness and selfless sacrifice into kindling for the bonfire of collective selfishness where nationalist "love" burns books and bodies in the flames of blind obedient rage. Only the dictates of the leader truly matter. (According to these outlines, China under Xi Jinping, North Korea under Kim Jong-un, Russia under Putin, Turkey under Erdoğan, and the current regime of the United States all exemplify varieties and degrees of authoritarian nationalism).[4]

[4] Recent changes have brought authoritarian nationalism to the doorstep of the U.S. domestic experience but the U.S. has, from Day One, embodied authoritarian nationalism for those whose lands it plundered and burned from genocide in Native America, napalming children in Vietnam, to burning civilians with white phosphorous and depleted uranium across the Middle East; from propping up dictatorships in Peru, Indonesia, Brazil, Philippines, Nicaragua, Cuba, El Salvador, Iraq, and Egypt to overthrowing elected governments in Chile, Iran, and Argentina, the United States has used the veneer of domestic democracy to excuse terror and tyrannical domination over countries around the world.

Yet, even while making persistent appeals to the "nation," nationalists encounter barriers akin to those met by communists and socialists seeking to change the global economic order. Imperial Technology, the growth and expansion of Capital worldwide, demands integration into the world system and no nation can escape it (even though North Korea, as much as anyone, tried to build an independent and self-sufficient nation in the 1960s and eventually met with famine and dependency upon foreign aid; after the fall of the Soviet Union, Cuba had some degree of success in painfully acquired self-sufficiency in the late 1990s). Integration into the world system means accepting practices that would violate pure nationalist ethics such as accepting low-wage immigrant labor, dependency upon products produced in foreign countries, accepting the sale of local businesses, industry, and land to foreign corporations or countries, wasting money and lives on foreign wars, and, in general, remaining economically susceptible to the whims of international finance.

Thus, even while nation-state economics will always leave room for authoritarian nationalists to take power, the story does not end there. If the nation-state survives an authoritarian nationalist takeover (and sometimes they do when they do not succumb to either civil war or invasion), the pendulum can swing again in other directions within the general parameter of nation-state economics (the same liberal politics that made a nation of workers feel impoverished and hungry for change can seem appealing when contrasted with the experience of war, dictatorship, state terror, or civil strife and devastation).

Yet now, we stand before a different scenario entirely. For France or Germany, Portugal or Peru, Thailand or Taiwan to succumb to an authoritarian nationalist takeover may cause larger or smaller stirs in the global order but when the center of economic power, the center of political power, the center of cultural power, the center of military might and Empire has succumbed to authoritarian nationalism as it now has in the United States, the entire scenario changes.

We do not know exactly what comes next. But we do know the impulses of authoritarian nationalism and the dictates of Imperial Technology lead toward a common destination: the dehumanization of its members and it riddles the path there with crisis, confusion, deception, and emergencies. Now, when authoritarian nationalism has not only acquired the reins of power in the United States, but has done so at a moment in history when various global eco-crises reach critical peaks and irreversible feedback loops, Machine Technology has developed into the early stages of Autonomous Machines. We begin to see a morphing of worlds.

Continuing on this path, authoritarian nationalism and mechanical social systems will exacerbate already existing features of Capital such as the *diffusion of responsibility* (atrocities will take place by both humans and autonomous machines but no one shall stand accountable); the *dehumanization of membership* (corporate and algorithmic media will elevate the manipulation of public moods and perspective to new levels of ignorance, brutality, callousness, and groupthink); and the *rapid acceleration of Machine Technology toward Autonomous Machines* (sold as "servants" and "tools," the replacements of humans and human culture will gain increasing deployment throughout society as they colonize physical, mental, and social spaces, eventually depriving humans of the most basic skills in self-sufficiency and independence).

Making the Nation "Great Again" means returning to a time when it could plunder and slaughter with impunity and without apology, performing mechanical mayhem with full psychopathic potential, unhindered and unhinged by legal or ethical constraints.

In light of this admittedly bleak depiction, one might then wonder: *what can we do?* This conclusion here attempts to outline some general approaches that adopt a *both/and* perspective, a *local-first* directive, and *mutual aid* to service the collective. All of these approaches seek to channel collective energy as much as possible resorting to non-Material Technologies such as techniques rooted in physical, mental, and/or social skills of training and collaboration that reduce dependency on mechanical systems and energy produced through electrical grids, drilling, mining, and the consumption of gas, oil, coal, or nuclear power. This means that, whenever possible and/or effective, we can emphasize non-Material Technologies over Material Technologies and prioritize non-Machine Technologies (e.g., hammer or pen) over Machine Technologies (e.g., nail gun or computer).[5] Obviously, many circumstances today do not allow for transitioning from Machine-dependent operations to non-mechanical options but, when we live in a society where people literally *drive* a car to a gym in order to use a *machine* to exercise *walking* or *running*, then we have ample space to reassess how and when we choose Machine-based activities over Physical, Mental, and Social-based activities.

Even if we put aside for a moment the harmful effects that mechanical energy consumption has on animals and eco-systems, the most "sustainable" forms of mechanical energy production tend to undermine local autonomy, produce unnecessary waste, and further the development of the advanced machinery slated to displace humans. Local, small-scale and non-mechanical production and consumption of energy, whenever possible and effective, can provide some degree of both awareness about energy production and consumption as well as a small step toward increased human autonomy over addiction to machines (recall that 99% of human history consisted of societies based on non-mechanical energy production even within harsh and unfriendly environments).[6]

While much of mechanically-oriented society remains either necessary, unlikely to change, or too difficult to remove in the near future, we suggest that a basic analytical assessment of sub-economic systems can provide insights as to which industries and sectors we could soon eradicate or radically diminish such as (but not limited to):

• *Insecurity Economy* (the practice of cultivating insecurities and self-doubt in people in order to sell them products, surgeries, or therapies to improve problems of psychological insecurity that advertising industries exploited or even helped create);

• *Addiction Economy* (the targeting of susceptible populations with advertising and products designed to produce more and continual consumption—often at the expense of personal, social, mental, and/or ecological health);

• *Excess Economy* (excessive luxuries without any meaningful technical or useful advantage beyond the display of more wealth and power);

• *Factory Farms* (unnecessary and excessive consumption of animal flesh at the expense of human, animal, and ecological health);

[5] This text, obviously not presented here on paper through a pen, may serve its goal better online but we may have assumed incorrectly. Time will tell.

[6] This does not mean that it would make any sense to attempt heating 8 billion homes with firewood nor that all Indigenous engaged in sustainable practices either on a small-scale or, if so, if such practices could reasonably translate to large scale. Rather, it means that, while we need mechanical systems today, instead of increasing our dependency upon their development, we can choose to regulate and decrease our dependency by opting for mechanical alternatives only insofar as we need them and harmful consequences of their use do not outweigh the benefits they afford.

• *Casino Economy* (literal casino industries which produce nothing but arbitrary and minimal wealth distribution while robbing the majority of time, energy, and financial resources; the same goes for the larger casino of financial trading in which the vast majority of "investments" trade back and forth within a week for short-term gains, partially remedied by an international micro "Tobin Tax" of 0.1% on such trading);

• *A.I. Industry* (A.I. searches consume as much as eight times more energy than regular online searches; chatbots further unnecessary techno-dependency; A.I. usage in governments and corporate bureaucracies advance mass surveillance, undermine accountability, and potentially threaten worker security; and, most significantly, the A.I. industry advances the tyranny of Autonomous Machines).

Radically restricting, reducing, or eliminating these economies could go a long way toward helping us regain some control over the trajectory of human development as well slow down current destruction of local and global eco-systems. Yet, we needn't stop there. We can take time to consider which directions we might prefer over the dire and limited futures presented to us now as "inevitable."

First, what do we seek in counter to the toxic but seductive promises of authoritarian nationalists and Imperial Technology? We seek actual input into our future and daily lives. Rather than lip service, we seek understanding of the forces that shape local life and industry and we seek options to meaningfully affect what gets produced, sold, and disposed of where we live. We seek reasonable and equitable distribution of wealth because inordinate wealth means inordinate power and a plutocracy by default. Any human society that actually has a degree of self-determination will have the capacity to not only rein in galloping disparities in wealth and distribute it toward the benefit of the community at large but it will retain the means to place *de facto* limitations on the amount of excess wealth and power any given person, company, or institution has within its fold. As the saying goes, democracy entails 100 workers deciding over one boss, not one boss deciding over 100 workers. Cooperative responsibility for productive enterprises means advancing the practice of worker-run institutions. In a sane society where food exists, no one goes hungry, period. We seek an economic life adapted to and in harmony with ecological life (including the welfare of plants, animals, and eco-systems) which means the absolute abolishment of the existing profit and property-based system which neglects vital necessities and gives preferential treatment to toxic accessories, unnecessary consumption, addictive substances, tools of destruction, and impulsive tendencies. A healthy society begins with healthy food, clean water, and living relationships to the Earth that produces and maintains them. Living relationships means recognizing the features and behavior patterns of addiction and learning to address them quickly and constructively without blame or shame but with shared struggles and open discussion. Lastly, we seek a stable, fair, and secure means of resolving conflict with minimal violence. This means educating about and dismantling forms of arbitrary discrimination and prejudice while developing skills and capacities for hearing one another's stories and struggles. It also means teaching children from an early age how to articulate their own needs and feelings (including learning to distinguish between actual needs and manufactured desires and addictions) while also learning to listen and empathize with the needs and feelings of others, resolving conflict and addressing violence constructively (rather than mechanically teaching children to say "I'm sorry" and moving on). In any context where a person's fate and legal treatment must depend on the quality of defense that money can buy, the resulting disparity will only entrench itself into institutions. Therefore, we seek justice beyond courts, compensation and restitution beyond prisons, and security beyond fences, gated communities, border patrols, police, weapons, and military forces.

To achieve these aims with all cards stacked us, we see the following interlinked approaches, even working optimally, as potentially insufficient but better situated to deliver constructive results than alternative approaches (e.g., terrorism, plotting armed revolution or a coup, trusting in liberal reform, or declining into despair, resignation, and collective paralysis).

I. ***Address addiction not just personally but systemically.*** Groups such as Alcoholic Anonymous and other Twelve-Step programs exemplify one form of successful, widespread, decentralized, and durable Social Technology. People can build on this experience by forming local mutual aid encounter groups modeled on 12-Step programs where people can express themselves and listen to each other as *dependents* and *co-dependents* living in a system steered by *societal addiction*. These encounters can also serve as gathering points to share information in regard to mutual aid needs in which people serve one another without the use of money or Machine Technology.

II. ***Campaign and organize revolutionary reform strategies.*** Whether the 8-hour work day, abortion rights, or marriage equality, gradual reform changes leave people better equipped to organize for further reforms. In contrast to liberal reform work that sees each reform as an end unto itself, revolutionary reform strategies frame each victory as one step that not only provides an achievement in itself but also further enables additional momentum and advantages to work toward an egalitarian and stateless society. Whether raising the minimum wage, taxing meat, capping wealth, boycotting a certain industry, or regulating toxic chemicals, each community decides on its own which issue to address in campaigns and in which ways but the total sum effect aims to serve the broader movement as a whole for a more humane (and more human) society.

III. ***Build alternative institutions that supplant the need for state and capital.*** This long-term strategy of building a new society in the shell of the old, doesn't happen overnight but it can provide potential for both increasing local stability, community relations, and maximizing self-sufficiency from governmental and international financial dependency. Whether forming worker-cooperatives, union organizing, (to ultimately take over worksites), general strikes at national and international levels, establishing mutual aid networks to provide local security, safety, and conflict-resolution needs, urban farming, community gardens, and food-sharing networks, or grassroots health education and basic care, every amount of time and energy devoted locally builds the strength of the local community body.

IV. ***Form eco-villages and solidarity-based communes.*** While going "off-grid" and leaving mainstream society cannot in itself offer much opportunity to change society-at-large, communes and eco-villages can serve at least three major functions: (a) they can illustrate a microcosm of the type of world we aim to build on a larger scale; (b) they provide experimental incubators wherein one can learn a wealth of practical local-based knowledge related to everything from farming techniques to conflict-resolution; (c) they can help supply organic foods from rural areas to people in city areas. A possible fourth benefit could entail functioning as places of refuge for people in hiding from state repression.

V. ***Train both physical and intellectual self-defense.*** Development of group training in martial arts as well as critical thinking and analysis of information, research, and propaganda can serve the dual function of protecting communities from physical assault as well as from waves of panic, mass hysteria, and disinformation campaigns (whether via mechanical, human sources, or a combination of the two). Should times ever require an emergency expression of insurrection (see, for example, the background to the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas in 1994), this type of training, planning, and preparation could come in useful.

VI. ***Educate, stock, and train for communal responses to state collapse.*** At some point, the nation-state and/or global economic system, whether through its own devices, ecological changes, pandemic, or triggered by Autonomous Machines, may experience long-term or short-term collapse. Prepping together—not as a solitary exercise for personal but *communal* survival—entails learning basic strategies to help oneself and others in times of need when one no longer has access to an electrical grid, hospital, or electronic money system.

VII. ***Build direct and living networks.*** Wherever one lives and labors, we can take the time to actually listen to one another and build on the potential from human connections around us rather than depend primarily on connections acquired electronically. Local networks, in reverse-wiring the group selfishness of authoritarian nationalism, can manifest in the capacity of groups to collectively sacrifice on behalf of and in solidarity with those in greater need (whether the Robin Hood actions of Blekingegadegänget, Jewish activists supporting BDS, Quaker peacemakers, Zapatista support work for queers, women in Liberia banding together to end civil war, or animal liberators operating globally, we see potential everywhere for local bonds to work on behalf of welfare for the larger whole). Various activities, such as initiating a local community center, open-mic events, porch-side study circles, living room workshops in difficult dialogues (skill-development in active listening and responding constructively to a variety of radically opposing views and beliefs), serve to fill this role as communities of people grow increasingly alienated from one another and, again, each person, each community can figure out what needs and opportunities reflect their own situation.

In the end, however, no list, no plan, no theory, no blueprint can supplant the need for DIY grassroots activity and experimentation. Reach out, organize, share your experiences, and dreams. Together, beyond the deadening, distracting, and disorienting effect of screens, we can reconnect with land and life. Instead of the toxic promise of mechanical perfection and precision, we humans can proceed with a wide variety of flaws and limitation but with an age-old and inherent capacity for learning and creativity. Building on lessons from the past and adapting to present circumstances, we can slowly create new structures, norms, and institutions that value health over profits, sentience over intelligence, sanity over addiction, and cooperation over competition. Nation, Capital, and Empire may serve as the interface for mechanical and dystopian processes steering us toward destruction but we can resist their impulses and conventions by centering nature and helping one another along the way.

> *I firmly believe that before many centuries more, science will be the master of man. The engines he will have invented will be beyond his strength to control.*
>
> - Henry Adams (1862)

> *I let go of economics,*
>
> *and people become prosperous.*
>
> -Lao Tzu, *Dao de Jing* (ca. 500 BCE)

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